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Thursday, 19 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Dah
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Ms. Samson
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/279)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before we proceed to the item on our agenda, it is with great shock that I wish to inform the members of the Security Council of the sudden passing yesterday of our dear colleague and friend, the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue.

There are no words to express our feelings of sorrow at this sad news. On behalf of all members of the Security Council, I express our deepest condolences to the wife and family of the Ambassador, as well as to the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire for the loss of a great diplomat who always participated in Council discussions with independence and in a constructive manner. He was committed to the Charter of the United Nations, the maintenance of international peace and security, and the need to put an end to the suffering of millions of people affected by conflicts and humanitarian crises, especially in his own dear continent of Africa. We will remember him with great respect and appreciation.

I therefore ask that we all now rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of our dear colleague, Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/279)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in today's meeting.

On behalf of the Security Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Oscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, and Minister for Foreign Affairs María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar and their team.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/279, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Arnault.

Mr. Arnault (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by expressing my personal condolences to the Government and the Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire on the passing of Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue. His resolute support for our work has been a great source of encouragement for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

(*spoke in English*)

It is a privilege to share once again the floor with Vice-President Óscar Naranjo Trujillo in the presence of Foreign Minister María Ángela Holguín. Both have been firm pillars of the peace process during both the negotiation and the implementation phase, and we are grateful for the close and supportive relation they have maintained with the Mission.

On 11 March, millions of Colombians turned out to vote in congressional elections that were a clear step forward in the country's transition from conflict to peace. The elections were also a milestone in the transition of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) from weapons to politics. The presidential election is now five weeks away, and against a background of polarization, the campaign so far has continued the trend towards a reduction of electoral violence.

Among legislative developments since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/279), let us also note that a couple of weeks ago the Constitutional Court endorsed the Law on the Status of the Opposition — a piece of legislation

derived from the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace that had previously been on the agenda of Congress since the adoption of the current Constitution in 1991. In particular, it provides opposition parties with access to media, additional funding and representation in the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives for runners-ups in the presidential and vice-presidential elections. In addition, last night, the same Court unanimously declared constitutional the political participation of FARC, including the 10 seats in Congress provided for in the Peace Agreement. This is a particularly important ruling at this juncture.

With regard to the socioeconomic reintegration of FARC members, the Superintendent of Banks issued the expected decree to facilitate the opening of bank accounts for FARC cooperatives. It confirms that entities under the supervision of the Superintendent can provide banking services to former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in the process of reintegration on an equal footing with the rest of the population, and that, with the exception of individuals on international sanctions lists, the entities cannot deny those services to persons on account of their being former combatants.

With respect to security guarantees, a significant development was the approval two days ago, after many months of consultations with a large array of civil society organizations, of a programme for the security and protection of communities, organizations, social leaders and human rights defenders. The programme was one of the main commitments in the Peace Agreement. It supplements the current focus of the National Protection Unit on the protection of individual leaders with a more collective approach to the security of communities, which is in line with challenges that have been identified in the countryside by State institutions, social organizations and the Mission itself. The programme also provides for a ground-up approach to security on the appropriate premise that local authorities and communities are best placed to identify threats and protection measures. We will provide maximum support for its implementation.

The last couple of weeks have also brought new challenges to the peace process. The arrest of one of the leaders of FARC on drug trafficking charges reverberated in a country that remains divided around the peace process. From the FARC leadership, and particularly from the party's President Timoleón Jiménez, calls for calm and statements of resolve to continue to pursue the path of the Peace Agreement have been very important in addressing misgivings and mistrust among former combatants in the reintegration areas. In addition, the Government has stated its commitment to accelerating the implementation of the Peace Agreement, particularly with regard to reintegration. We welcome the fact that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is able to take on its responsibilities in relation to this case, in accordance with the Peace Agreement.

We also agree wholeheartedly that there is a need for a sustained drive to put the reintegration of former combatants on a more solid basis before the end of the Government's mandate. Weakness in this effort can only increase the risk of the drift of some ex-combatants to criminal groups, such as those responsible for the tragic killings and kidnappings of Ecuadorian nationals operating in the border area with Ecuador. As mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report, the ingredients for a such a breakthrough in reintegration are well-known — viable productive projects, functional cooperatives and the availability of land — and much of the legal and technical preparation has already been done. We look forward to the prompt approval of the decree allowing access to land to former combatants.

I mentioned earlier the new programme on the protection of communities. I should note that with its adoption, implementation of the most important commitments of the Peace Agreement with regard to security matters is under way: the National Commission on Security Guarantees, the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General, the Police Elite Corps, the strengthened early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman, and the National Protection Unit's special protection measures for FARC are in place. Furthermore, the decree on the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics was passed and endorsed by the Constitutional Court.

The Secretary-General reported on the activation of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, on whose leadership we continue to count to focus the attention of institutions on bringing much-needed security to the countryside and address the threats and attacks against community leaders and human rights defenders. In this respect, the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General has now expanded its investigations to cover killings of those leaders

after initially focusing primarily on the assassination of FARC members. As of this month, it has assumed 58 such cases of community leaders and human rights defenders. It is currently giving priority to those with a view to achieving results as soon as possible.

While it is obviously too early to take stock of a peace process that has set ambitious and long-term goals, we have already observed that it has achieved a notable reduction of violence in the context of the congressional elections. Similarly, it has created a series of institutions dedicated to overcoming patterns of social, economic and political violence in the conflict areas. That is a substantial change, and the next few months provide an opportunity to bring together Government institutions, local authorities and social organizations to press forward with that agenda.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, negotiations between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional have resumed. The Catholic Church and the Mission, which supported the implementation of the temporary ceasefire at the end of last year, have presented their recommendations to both parties to support their effort to reach a more reliable ceasefire. The two parties have reiterated their interest in United Nations support in the implementation of a future ceasefire. The Security Council will obviously make the appropriate decisions in due time. Meanwhile, we will do our best to ensure that the design of the ceasefire is as robust as possible.

Throughout the implementation phase of the Peace Agreement, circumstances have occasionally tested the commitment of the two parties to stay the course. They have stayed the course. The unanimous support consistently voiced by the Council has helped sustain that resolve. It will continue to be a source of confidence and strength.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council wishing to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): It is an honour to have Their Excellencies the Vice-President and the Foreign Minister of Colombia with us today.

On behalf of the British people and Government, I too would like to begin by expressing my condolences to our colleagues of Côte d'Ivoire, to the family and friends of Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue, and to our friends in Côte d'Ivoire and its Government and people. It is indeed a great loss and we send them all our condolences and sympathy.

Turning to Colombia, it is very good to have the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia with us again. He and I have known each other for a very long time. I would like to thank him for his work and that of his entire team on the ground. This is a historic peace agreement. I think Colombia is to be congratulated on taking this tremendously important and historic step that ended 50 years of conflict. It is a huge achievement and serves as a global inspiration for others. It shows what can be done for peace when there is bold leadership.

From its experience with Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom knows that the implementation of such agreements is very challenging. I think that it has proved to be no less challenging for Colombia. The United Kingdom is proud to stand with Colombia in support of the implementation process and the country can rely on us to do so in the months and years ahead.

I was very interested to hear from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General about some of the remarkable progress that has been achieved over the past three months, in particular his remarks with regard to the ruling and the banks. Those were an important steps forward. We also welcome the congressional elections in March, which saw the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) participate in Colombia's democratic process for the first time. We believe that this is indeed a key point in FARC's political transformation and a truly remarkable achievement, given the short time since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in 2016. We also welcome the progress that has been made in implementing the Agreement, notably on structures for truth, justice and reparations for the victims of the conflict and the activation of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Special Unit for the Search for Persons — two very important steps.

On the resumption of talks with the National Liberation Army, we welcome the return to dialogue, but I would also like to mention the very real challenges that remain for the implementation of the Final Agreement. Those challenges include continued insecurity in some of the areas affected by the

conflict, and they can include violence and threats against former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). The protection measures, including FARC participation and close protection of its leaders, are key steps in helping address that, and it is vital that the Government's strategy for security guarantees is properly resourced and coordinated with the police, the Office of the Attorney General and judicial authorities. I was reassured by what the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had to say about the arrest of the FARC leader. We would like to echo those calls for calm and for ensuring that the provisions of the Peace Agreement continue to be followed.

One of our other concerns is the levels of violence against community leaders and human rights defenders. It is very good that the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General will be able to investigate those attacks.

The launch of plan Horus represents a bold and comprehensive response to security challenges in vulnerable areas and we look forward to seeing an ongoing approach to stabilization that is coordinated with police and civilian agencies. I think that will be vital for long-term stability.

Turning to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we would like to thank its staff, and Mr. Todd Howland in particular for his leadership at the Office. We welcome the appointment of his successor, Mr. Alberto Brunori. The Office has played a key role in supporting the peace process and we will continue to watch its work very closely.

In the next weeks and months, it is vital that reintegration projects are active in all 26 areas for training and reintegration. That will help prevent further former FARC-EP members from joining dissident groups. We look forward to seeing resources unlocked and timelines accelerated for crop substitution, rural development and the reintegration of former combatants.

The United Kingdom encourages further progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreement over the coming months to support continued progress towards a sustained peace in Colombia. Colombia can definitely count on the United Kingdom's continued and deep support.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On behalf of the Chinese Mission in New York and me personally, I express our deepest condolences with regard to the untimely passing of Ambassador Tanoh-Boutchoue to his family and to the Permanent Mission and Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue was a senior diplomat and our close colleague and friend. His passing is extremely tragic.

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, for his presence and Her Excellency the Foreign Minister of Colombia for attending the meeting. I thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing.

The Colombian peace process is crucial to achieving comprehensive peace and development in Colombia. It is also instrumental to maintaining peace and stability in the whole region. China commends the commitment and relentless efforts made by the Colombian Government, President Santos Calderón, and all other parties concerned.

A comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace signed between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) is central to the Colombian peace process. Currently, the implementation of the Peace Agreement is facing some challenges. We hope that the parties concerned in Colombia can meet each other halfway, overcome difficulties and continue to consistently facilitate the peace process in order to maintain the positive momentum of the Colombian peace process and establish conditions conducive to the full implementation of the Peace Agreement between the Government and FARC-EP.

The Colombian peace process is irreversible, based on a high-level consensus among all parties in Colombia and the international community. The Security Council and the international community must continue to play close attention to and support the peace process, respect the ownership of the Government and the people of Colombia with regard to the process and provide constructive assistance to the overall implementation of the Peace Agreement.

China commends the important role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Arnault, and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in facilitating the Colombian peace process. We hope that the Mission will continue to enhance its communication with the Government and

the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común and do more to build trust and facilitate the implementation of the peace agreement.

China applauds the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) for honouring its commitment to a unilateral ceasefire during the parliamentary elections this year. We hope that the Verification Mission will continue to leverage its role in urging the ELN to reach a new ceasefire agreement with the Government as soon as possible.

Together with other members of the Council, China is ready to make a greater contribution to the ongoing facilitation of the peace process and the early achievement of overall peace and security in Colombia.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Let me say how heartbroken we are to learn of the passing of our dear friend and brother, Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations. We thank you, Sir, for arranging the minute of silence in his memory and for your remarks on our behalf.

The departure of our friend was so sudden, untimely and completely unexpected. For three or four weeks, he had not been himself. He had become unduly introspective. Nonetheless, he never ignored his absolute loyalty to friends in whom he confided his innermost feelings. One could not find a better person at a time when good people are sorely needed. It is a time when standing up for the truth and what is right has become indispensable to regional and international peace and security. He has left us extremely heartbroken. We express condolences to his family, colleagues and fellow countrymen.

Turning to today's subject, we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Arnault, for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/279). We are honoured and pleased to see His Excellency the Vice-President of Colombia here with us today. We also acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency the Foreign Minister of Colombia.

The congressional elections held on 11 March send a positive message to all those who closely follow the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. It sends a positive message, not only because it was concluded in a peaceful manner, but also because it is of symbolic significance, opening a new chapter in the country's encouraging political trajectory following five decades of conflict. We congratulate both the Government of Colombia and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común on their commitment, as well as on that tremendous achievement.

For reasons that are most obvious, we follow and care about the success of the Colombian peace process. For us in Africa, it is a source of inspiration. The Colombian Peace Agreement has rekindled a sense of hope and optimism for peace and stability in the country. The patience and perseverance shown in facing the challenges in the implementation process has begun to show results. The Council should continue to provide the necessary support to the Colombian parties in the speedy implementation of the agreement.

We are conscious of the sensitive issues that still require careful handling, including the expeditious approval by Congress of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the social and economic reintegration of former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) into civilian life, access to land ownership, the provision of personal and collective security and protection measures, the absence or inadequate presence of State institutions in places left by FARC-EP combatants, the continuous killings of community leaders, former FARC-EP members and their relatives, as well as other issues highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General that could potentially create political complications.

We raise those matters because we care about the process. As I said earlier, we draw great inspiration from events in Colombia. While we commend the continued political will being demonstrated by the Government with regard to legal guarantees, more must be done to accelerate the full implementation of the amnesty law and resolve all other outstanding issues.

With regard to the negotiations between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), we recall the Council's condemnation in January of renewed attacks by the ELN. We are encouraged by reports that the two parties have now resumed the fifth round of negotiations to broker an improved ceasefire agreement. We urge the parties to engage in constructive discussions in good faith in order to reach a new ceasefire and a permanent peace agreement. We commend Special Representative Arnault, as well as United Nations personnel in Colombia, on all their efforts in support of the peace

agreement. We also reiterate our appreciation to countries of the region and other international partners that continue to closely support and accompany the implementation of the peace agreement.

Lastly, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our continued support for the full implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement and stand in solidarity with the people and Government of Colombia in their exemplary efforts to transition to sustainable peace.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the fact that the continued success of the process is critical not only to the people of Colombia but to the entire world. We hope that Colombians will continue to rally behind the Peace Agreement and support the sustainable implementation of the accord. The successful holding of the presidential elections in Colombia, whose first round is scheduled for 27 May, will be vital to ensure continued progress.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I believe we all sit here today with a heavy heart because we have lost our brother and friend, Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue was kind and caring. He always had a smile on his face and his laughter was contagious. I do not know how we come to terms with the fact that we lost him so soon. I have no doubt that he is telling jokes in heaven. I would like to extend our condolences to the people of Côte d'Ivoire and to let them know that we feel their sorrow and pain. He represented them well. With that, I will say that we have lost the sweetest among us. I think that he would always want us to remember the reasons we are here and our goal. I think that that would be the greatest tribute we could pay to his memory.

I would like to thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing. I would also like to welcome the participation of the Vice-President of Colombia and presence of the Foreign Minister in the Council.

After a week in which the Council had six separate meetings in an effort to stop the bloodshed in Syria, preserving and cultivating an existing peace agreement takes on special meaning. The Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which ended five decades of war in Colombia, has created the conditions for the just and lasting peace that Colombians deserve. It was a historic achievement, but peace in Colombia remains an unfinished project. All of us have a role to play in ensuring that it succeeds.

First, we should give credit where credit is due. We have seen significant and visible progress in the early phases of the implementation of the Peace Agreement. In just over six months, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) handed over thousands of weapons and explosives. It has also transformed itself into a political party and participated in elections.

For its part, the Government has begun reincorporating thousands of ex-combatants into civilian life. It has established transitional justice institutions. The challenge remains for the Government to expand its presence throughout the country. We cannot allow areas formerly controlled by FARC-EP to fall into the hands of criminals and illegal armed groups. That would undo much of the progress of the peace accord. We encourage the Government to continue efforts to eliminate Colombia's ungoverned spaces. The United States also urges the Government to continue the full implementation of the comprehensive peace plan, which includes efforts to reintegrate former combatants into civilian life.

The peace accord provides an important opportunity to address historical land issues that have driven conflict and violence in Colombia. We welcome President Santos Calderón's landmark decree meant to formalize land ownership for more than 2.5 million farmers. Improving access to land is essential to transforming rural livelihoods. Criminal groups and narcotraffickers have dominated rural areas of Colombia for decades. With secure land titles, the Colombian people can provide for their families without feeling beholden to those groups. It will also help achieve sustainable solutions to reducing coca cultivation, prevent violence against human rights defenders, and build a strong foundation for lasting peace in Colombia.

But peace is a two-way process, and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) has significant responsibilities too. For peace to succeed, FARC must honour its commitments under the agreement. It must provide compensation to victims of the conflict. Restoring trust in Colombia's institutions after so many years of conflict will be extremely difficult. In fact, it will be impossible if FARC does not cooperate. FARC must participate fully and honestly in the transitional justice process. During my trip to the region in February, I saw the tremendous role that Colombia is playing to combat drug trafficking in Central America. That is another good sign for the peace process. The success of the Peace Agreement

is inseparable from our shared efforts against drug trafficking.

The United States and Colombia have set a goal of reducing cocaine production and coca cultivation in Colombia by 50 per cent in 2023. We encourage the Government to recognize drug trafficking for the damage it does to the social, economic and security well-being of the country. The Government must accelerate its counter-narcotics effort. FARC should also live up to its obligations to end its involvement in drug trafficking and share any information it has on drug-trafficking routes. Drugs fuelled the conflict in Colombia and eroded its Government and civic institutions. The United States stands ready to continue to assist in the recovery.

Finally, we would like to thank the Government of Colombia and the Vice-President for all they have done to help the Venezuelans flooding into the country to escape the oppressive Maduro Moros regime. At a time when Colombians have had their hands full consolidating the peace of their own country, they have stepped up to the challenge of helping others. We are grateful not just for their kindness but for the leadership Colombia is showing. The United States is fully committed to supporting Colombia and the implementation of the peace accord. The challenges are real, but the outlook is bright. We look forward to our continued friendship and partnership with a stronger, safer Colombia in the years to come.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Today is a sad day for the Security Council family. The sudden and untimely death of Mr. Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue last evening has left us all stunned and speechless. On behalf of Kazakhstan, I offer our sincerest condolences to the Government, the nation and the people of Côte d'Ivoire for having lost one of their outstanding diplomats, whose life we honour today in the Council.

Bernard was one of us, and his loss is irreplaceable for he exemplified all that is finest in diplomacy, dignity and the best of humanity and compassion. With a distinguished life dedicated to the service of his country, he reflected an immense depth of political acumen and wisdom that touched us deeply. His presence on the Council gave us invaluable insights into how a country emerging from the ravages of war can undergo a remarkable transformation to take a seat on the apex organ of the United Nations and contribute to peace and security. An excellent diplomat of quiet grace and inner strength, a true gentleman, loyal friend and beautiful soul, he will continue to live in our hearts and memories.

Turning now to the topic that convenes us today, I would like to welcome Colombian Vice-President, His Excellency Oscar Naranjo Trujillo, and Foreign Minister Maria Holguin Cuellar to the Security Council. I would also like to thank Special Representative Arnault for his briefing today and for the tireless efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia towards ensuring a peaceful future for the country.

My delegation commends the leadership of Colombia for its firm dedication and strong commitment to the peace process, irrespective of the huge challenges it faces. We also commend the United Nations role in accompanying the peace process, including the visits of the Secretary-General in January, the Department of Political Affairs partners' field visit in February and the President of the General Assembly's trip in March to Colombia.

It has been three months since the Colombian peace process entered its second year. During these three months, we have observed remarkable positive developments in the ongoing peace process. In that context, I would like to underline the first parliamentary elections held in Colombia last March after a historic peace deal was achieved in 2016. According to the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2018/279), these were the most inclusive elections in decades.

In view of the upcoming presidential elections in Colombia, we believe that the new President and Government will continue to show the same political will and commitment to implementing the ongoing peace process and putting the victims of the armed conflict at the centre of the Colombian political agenda. Kazakhstan highly appreciates the efforts of the Colombian Government and former rebels of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in the overall peaceful conduct of the elections.

We also note the launch of Colombia's transitional justice tribunal — the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. That mechanism, together with the Commission on Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition and the Special Unit for the Search for Persons, is the core of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Its role is essential to the successful continuation of the peace process. We look

forward to the other peace-related pending legislation being approved soon, guaranteeing the peace accord's full implementation and securing its irreversibility for the benefit of all Colombians.

Kazakhstan joins others in particularly commending the signing of the landmark decree that will formalize the land ownership of 2.5 million Colombian farmers. That was provided in the peace deal and the implementation of that promise opens the door to improving the quality of life of Colombian peasants. Moreover, given the fact that land ownership was the root cause of the more than half-of-a-century armed conflict, we believe that the legalization of land titles is key to peacebuilding.

Colombia still has a complicated journey ahead in order to achieve long-lasting peace. We need to address the alarming trends that, inter alia, have resulted in the killings of social and community leaders and human rights defenders, triggered in part by a power vacuum in the territories that were abandoned by the ex-combatants, which is of particular concern and might call the effective implementation of the peace process into question.

It will therefore be crucial to strengthen the nexus linking security and development, enhance efforts to achieve the socioeconomic reintegration of former FARC-EP rebels, ensure employment and adequate living standards and promote health care and educational and productive projects for those victims most affected by the conflict, including women, children and ethnic and indigenous communities. We urge the Government of Colombia to maintain its focus on providing concrete avenues to reintegration for former combatants in rural communities and on preventing increases in insecurity by expanding the State presence and State services. At the same time, the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común should also live up to its obligations and contribute to the peace process.

We welcome the constructive and wise decision of the Colombian Government to restart peace talks in Quito with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which were frozen in January after a spate of ELN attacks. Kazakhstan hopes that the fifth cycle of talks, which were resumed on 15 March, will contribute to achieving a new bilateral ceasefire, which could pave the way for a permanent peace agreement with the ELN. Kazakhstan reiterates its firm commitment to the Colombian peace process and calls on all interested parties to do their best to foster reconciliation. From now on, the success of the peace process will entirely depend on the commitment of all parties to the concept of the peace deal, and will come to fruition only if they are united in their will to eliminate conflict and effectively live in peace. We therefore encourage all Colombians to work hard in order to overcome challenges and facilitate and expedite the establishment of lasting peace in the country. Kazakhstan strongly supports the Government of Colombia and stands ready to join multilateral and regional efforts to accelerate the momentum of the peace process that will ultimately bring about stability, progress and prosperity for all Colombians.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): We are all in a state of shock following the death of our colleague and friend Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue. On behalf of France and on a personal level, I want to once again express our heartfelt condolences and deep sympathy to his family, friends and all the members of the Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire. The United Nations has lost a great professional, Côte d'Ivoire an excellent representative, and France a friend whose limitless kindness will continue to inspire us.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jean Arnault for his very informative briefing, as well as for his commitment and exemplary effort. I also thank the Vice-President and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia for their presence here today and their tireless work in negotiating and implementing the Peace Agreement concluded with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

On behalf of France, I would like to once again pay tribute here to the political courage of the Colombian authorities, which took the initiative of launching the historic peace process with FARC-EP. Colombia's commitment to peace is a source of inspiration for us all, as the Ambassador of Ethiopia so eloquently said earlier. The United Nations, in general, and the Security Council, in particular, have played their full roles in providing the necessary support for the disarmament and political transition of that armed group. Since September 2017 that support has been manifested through ensuring the monitoring of the reintegration of former combatants, which is a crucial step towards the lasting implementation of the peace agreement. With regard to the mandate for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, the Organization's

second Mission to that country, I will briefly underscore three points.

First, France congratulates the Colombian authorities on the organization and successful holding of the 11 March congressional elections, which the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), the new political party that resulted from the peace process, participated in. Colombian institutions and the Peace Agreement have been strengthened by that democratic exercise, as a result of which former combatants will become members of the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. The opening of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to the public also represents a significant step towards the political reintegration of former combatants. We encourage the current Government and, more generally, all of the country's political groups, to consolidate the progress made and move forward towards the full implementation of the Peace Agreement between Colombia and FARC-EP. Particular attention should be given to the issue of amnesty for prisoners, as provided for in the Agreement.

My second point concerns the security of the women and men who are working to bring peace to the conflict-affected areas. We welcome the steps taken by the Colombian Government to end the high level of violence in those areas, in particular the murders of civil-society leaders, human rights defenders and people involved in coca substitution programmes. Despite the commitment of the authorities, the situation remains worrisome. The local populations have not seen much evidence of the peace dividends. We therefore encourage efforts to deploy State services to those areas, whether through security forces or civil institutions. It will also be crucial to combat impunity for crimes committed within the context of the conflict, including extrajudicial executions, whether by investigating the perpetrators of such crimes or those who ordered violent acts.

Lastly, I would once again like to draw attention to a critical point related to reintegration and the future of the peace process, which is access to land and sources of income. Once the issue of access to land, including the restitution of land that was seized during the conflict and is under legal proceedings, has been settled, it is economic projects that will provide former combatants with the prospect of a future within the Colombian national community. Such economic reintegration will be key to the lasting success of the peace process. It will continue to enjoy broad support from the international community, including France and the European Union, through various financial instruments. Ensuring peace in territories that have been ravaged by conflict for more than 50 years depends on it.

France, which supported President Santos Calderón's efforts to achieve peace from the beginning, hopes that the Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and FARC-EP will be recorded in history as the end of a conflict and the beginning of a new era in Colombia in which former combatants will have their place in Colombian society and other groups will follow the example of FARC. We hope that the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional will reach a new ceasefire as soon as possible and that negotiations will enable the achievement of a historic peace in Colombia that will send an exemplary message of hope to the world.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I would like to join you, Mr. President, and our colleagues around the table in expressing my shock and deep sadness at the sudden death of Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue. We would like to express our heartfelt condolences to his family and his colleagues at the Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and our thoughts are with them at this tragic time. Bernard had a distinguished career in the service of his country, and that was very much reflected in his approach on the Security Council. He always made time for dialogue with us. He was keen to hear other perspectives and ready to share his own experience. His contributions to our deliberations were always thoughtful, considered and insightful, and our discussions here will be all the poorer as a result of his absence. Côte d'Ivoire has lost one of its finest diplomats, and we have lost a dear friend and colleague.

Let me now turn to Colombia. I too would like to thank Special Representative Jean Arnault for his valuable briefing to the Council. I want to assure him of Sweden's continued firm support for his efforts and the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I also acknowledge and welcome the presence of Mr. Óscar Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, and María Holguín Cuéllar, Colombia's Minister for Foreign Affairs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and President Santos Calderón for their personal commitment to the peace process.

We commend both parties' firm commitment to peace, as well as their efforts to overcome challenges in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the Government of Colombia. Last year saw the successful laying down of arms and the conversion of FARC-EP into a political party. The congressional elections held on 11 March this year were the most inclusive and least violent in decades, demonstrating how peace is already benefiting Colombia and Colombians.

Recognizing and addressing the legacy of conflict is essential to reconciliation and to building a peaceful future. We welcome the fact that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has begun its crucial work. It was designed and agreed on with the priority objective of guaranteeing truth, justice, reparation and no relapse into conflict. We hope that its procedures will be rapidly agreed on.

According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/279), threats, violence and killings of human rights defenders, community leaders, FARC-EP members and their families have continued. Needless to say, this is deeply worrying and underscores the importance of ensuring that the State can fill the power vacuum and safeguard the rule of law and respect for human rights throughout the country.

The full political, legal and socioeconomic reintegration of former FARC-EP members is vital. That includes ensuring progress on the application of amnesty provisions, productive projects and the key issue of access to land for reintegration. In that regard, we hope that the decree allowing former combatants access to land to will be approved as soon as possible. A sustained effort from all parts of the Government in support of the wider Peace Agreement, including comprehensive rural reform, is needed so that the Agreement can begin delivering tangible peace dividends for all Colombians as soon as possible. Ensuring a stronger presence of civilian authorities and agencies providing goods and services to conflict-affected communities will be helpful in that regard.

Women played an important role in making peace in Colombia. The gender perspective must now be mainstreamed in all aspects of the implementation, and not least in the areas of reintegration and security. We call on the parties to ensure that protection efforts cover the specific challenges regarding the protection of women, including measures for enhanced prevention and responses to gender-based violence, as recommended in the Secretary-General's report.

We welcome the resumption of talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, and reiterate that the United Nations and the Security Council must stand ready to assist the parties in monitoring a renewed ceasefire. Sweden, as a member of the group of countries for support, accompaniment and cooperation at the negotiating table, will assist the process as much as it can.

Colombia also demonstrates how a united Security Council can contribute to peace. At this critical time in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, the United Nations and Colombia's international partners must continue to lend their full support to the parties. Colombia's Peace Agreement represents the culmination of a historic process that has brought an end to more than 50 years of conflict and violence. It shows that even the most entrenched conflicts can be brought to an end through dialogue and diplomacy, setting an irreversible course for peace. By remaining committed to the Peace Agreement, the parties are keeping faith with the hopes and aspirations of the Colombian people for the future of their country. We must continue to do all we can to support them in that.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of Russia, I would first like to express our condolences to the nearest and dearest of our colleague and friend Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoué, the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire, on his untimely passing. We will greatly miss his sense of humour, constructive attitude, professionalism and enthusiasm for the issues on the Council's agenda. He has done a great deal for his country and for the people of Côte d'Ivoire. We share their pain and sorrow. This is a severe blow to the United Nations diplomatic corps. May his soul rest in peace.

To return to this morning's topic, I want to welcome Oscar Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, and María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, Colombia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, to our meeting.

We are here today to discuss the situation in Colombia since the holding of parliamentary elections on 11 March. That was an important and significant event, considering that the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) took part in the elections for the first

time, after decades in opposition. Despite the modest results, that political force will represent the interests of its supporters. We congratulate Colombia and the Colombians on that achievement. Thanks to the sense of national responsibility they have demonstrated, the country has been able to take another very important step towards a sustainable peace.

We thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/279). Both the briefing and the report confirm that a lot of work remains to be done. We should have no illusions about that. Despite the fact that the country's situation has changed for the better by comparison to the war years, some chronic problems contain to present obstacles to strengthening sustainable peace, which is why we wholeheartedly endorse the support that the United Nations presence provides to Colombians under the leadership of Mr. Arnault. It was the support of the first special political mission, which completed its work last September, that helped Colombians to secure major gains in the peace process. In the wake of the ceasefire ending many years of conflict and the signing of the Final Peace Agreement at the end of 2016, the United Nations Mission in Colombia ensured the completion of the surrender of weapons by FARC-EP. Former combatants began to arrive in the reintegration zones, in spite of some problems with setting them up, as the Head of the Mission reported.

These successes enabled the Council to start discussing the shift to the second phase, that of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Issued six months after the start of the Verification Mission's work, the Secretary-General's report has pointed to a number of serious problems, particularly the bureaucratic obstacles that the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) encountered during a crucial stage of its electoral campaign. Unfortunately, the number of murders of former combatants and communal leaders has also increased exponentially. Against that backdrop, illegal armed groups have taken control of lands that had previously been liberated by FARC-EP, despite the announcement of the Horus plan, which is meant to ensure Government control in such areas. Furthermore, another topic that has provoked a significant reaction in Colombian society was missing from the report — the arrest on 9 April of Jesús Santrich, one of the negotiators of the Final Peace Agreement and a member of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común party who, as we know, was supposed to take up his parliamentary seat. We were pleased with Mr. Arnault's information that the key agreements of the parties remain in force. Together with the United Nations Mission, we will carefully monitor the process and the applicability, in this situation, of Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace, a key component of the Final Peace Agreement and therefore a guarantee of peace.

All of these issues will require careful attention from the Government, the United Nations Mission and the international community, which rightly see Colombia as an example of post-conflict rebuilding. Not to mention how attentively the Ejército de Liberación Nacional is watching the development of events.

All of that places a special responsibility on the Verification Mission, which should be fully mobilized and focused on fulfilling its mandate on schedule. That is especially important in the run-up to the presidential elections.

We believe that all parties must continue to adhere strictly to the outcome of the Peace Agreement in its current form by all parties, regardless of whatever changes await the country's Government. In that context, we will be paying close attention to the statements of the candidates. It is important to remember that the authority of the Security Council and the Secretary-General is invested in the success of the peace process.

For our part, we once again affirm our readiness to continue to support the people and the Government of Colombia in building lasting peace and sustainable post-conflict development.

Ms. Samson (Netherlands): At the outset, on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to express our deep condolences to the family, loved ones and colleagues at the Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire on the sudden passing of Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue. He will be sorely missed as a colleague and friend who was truly committed to the values of the United Nations and the work of the Security Council.

Turning to Colombia, I would like to start by thanking Mr. Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his clear and detailed briefing. We commend him and the United Nations Verification Mission for the excellent work that they are doing and assure them of our full support. I also want to express our

sincere appreciation for the presence of Vice-President Naranjo Trujillo and Foreign Minister Holguín Cuéllar with us here today. Their presence demonstrates the ongoing commitment of their Government to continuing to pursue peace.

The peace process is transforming Colombia. The participation of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) political party in the peaceful democratic parliamentary elections held on 11 March was a milestone, and we congratulate all stakeholders on the progress achieved. I would like to make three points today. The first is on the need to improve the security situation; the second is on the need for the inclusive reintegration of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the full and effective participation of women in the peace process; and the third is on the importance of a new ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).

First, I would like to highlight the importance of improving the security situation in former conflict areas. Significant progress has been made so far. However, sustainable peace can be achieved only once the civilians living in those areas can benefit from the peace dividend. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is concerned about new armed-group activity in those areas. We welcome the Horus plan and encourage its further implementation in coordination with other national efforts to restore State authority. That includes strengthening civilian institutions and the provision of services. Improving the security situation is a first step towards the sustainable development of such areas and a peaceful future for its inhabitants.

The problematic security situation in former conflict areas has also led to an increase in threats and acts of violence against community and social leaders and human rights defenders. Their protection should be a key priority, particularly given the upcoming elections. We appreciate the Colombian Government's increased efforts to ensure that, which should translate into an improved security situation on the ground. However, those responsible for the threats and violence must also be held to account.

My second point is that inclusivity is a condition for the success of the peace process, and ensuring it is an important way to address the root causes of the conflict. The political, socioeconomic and legal reintegration of former FARC-EP members must remain a priority. That includes progress on the amnesty provisions, access to land and productive projects. In particular, the Kingdom of the Netherlands calls for women's full and effective participation in the peace process. That includes the implementation of the specific gender provisions regarding security guarantees and the reintegration of female former combatants. In that light, we welcome the forum for gender focal points to be organized by the United Nations Verification Mission, to which the Netherlands has contributed.

Our third point is a message of support for the resumption of negotiations between the Government of Colombia and the ELN. We hope that the recent challenges will be overcome and that the negotiations will continue. We encourage all parties to commit to a ceasefire agreement and to give peace a chance. The Netherlands stands ready to support Colombia, including as a member of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the peace process in Colombia, as well as the people of Colombia. We therefore call on all stakeholders to continue their efforts to implement and uphold the Peace Agreement now, during the months ahead and in the years to come. Together, they can change the future of Colombia.

Mr. Dah (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Today is a particularly sad day for my country, Côte d'Ivoire, which has just lost its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, who died yesterday afternoon. I would like to thank all United Nations delegations for the many messages of support and solidarity they have conveyed to my country and to my delegation in particular, which continues to be deeply affected by this sudden passing. Bernard, as his Security Council colleagues affectionately called him, was passionate about his work. He was a kind man who was always smiling and attentive to his colleagues and co-workers. I am sure that the Security Council will miss him. As co-workers, we already miss him.

As the poet has said, there are tears that never stop flowing, voids that are never filled, memories that nothing can take away and people who can never be replaced. Smiles return, but only to cover the grief. Everything has been said but words can change nothing.

The sun has set over a fulfilled life but it will continue to shine in the garden of our memories.

Returning to today's meeting, my delegation thanks the Peruvian presidency for holding this briefing on the peace process in Colombia. We would also like to commend Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his excellent briefing. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to welcome the Vice-President of Colombia, who has been kind enough to grace today's meeting with his presence.

Côte d'Ivoire has been following the evolving sociopolitical situation in Colombia with great interest since the start of an intra-Colombian peace process two years ago. Our statement will focus on the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, the challenges in implementing it and the role of the international community, particularly the United Nations, in supporting the peace process. With regard to the implementation of the Peace Agreement, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the significant progress that has been made at various levels.

On the political front, my delegation welcomed the peaceful holding on 11 March of the first inclusive Colombian legislative elections, in which 73 candidates from the political party of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) participated. Beyond their results, the legislative elections represent an important step in the intra-Colombian reconciliation and peace process. My delegation hopes that the presidential election scheduled for May will further strengthen such achievements. In that context, Côte d'Ivoire also welcomes the decision of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón to resume the negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional that were suspended in the wake of several attacks perpetrated by that group. Their resumption could clearly help to de-escalate the conflict.

On the judicial front, it is important to welcome the effective start of the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which continues to be an essential component of the transitional justice system, to implement of the Peace Agreement of November 2016.

With regard to security, my country welcomes the establishment by the Colombian authorities of appropriate mechanisms to provide an institutional response to the deterioration of the security situation. My delegation also notes with satisfaction the emergence of a national consensus between Colombian institutions and civil society with regard to the protection of the lives and roles of the social leaders who are working to promote land restitution and to protect resources and the environment. My delegation congratulates the Colombian Government on the work it has accomplished and encourages it to continue to strive to remove all obstacles. Despite the that progress, the implementation of the Peace Agreement faces many challenges, including in the areas of socioeconomic reintegration, security and justice.

At the socioeconomic level, my country calls on the Government of Colombia to continue the reforms initiated by taking concrete measures to reintegrate former FARC-EP members and allowing access to land ownership and the development of productive projects and cooperatives. We urge the Government to take all the measures likely to improve the living conditions in ex-combatant assembly centres and to facilitate their successful socioeconomic integration.

In terms of security, Côte d'Ivoire remains concerned about the resurgence of violence, as well as by the killings of some former FARC-EP leaders. We welcome the determination of the Colombian authorities to pay close attention to these issues in order to ensure the safety of all Colombians without exception.

In view of the complexity of the ongoing peace process, my delegation reiterates the need for the Security Council to fully support the peace and reconciliation efforts of the Government of Colombia. My country commends the commitment and work done in Colombia by the Verification Mission and the United Nations country team. We welcome in particular the actions undertaken in the areas of peacebuilding, gender equality, child protection and ethnic and cultural integration. My delegation also welcomes the close cooperation between the Verification Mission and the United Nations country team, which was deemed necessary in consolidating and sustaining the efforts of the Colombian authorities for lasting peace.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire would like to assure the Colombian authorities of its support and determination to work with them to ensure the success of the peace and reconciliation process in Colombia.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my people and my Government, as well as on my own behalf, I wish to join the other members of the Security Council

in expressing my sadness at the tragic and unexpected loss of our good friend, Mr. Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue. We extend our condolences to his family and friends, the Côte d'Ivoire mission staff and to the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. We have all lost a good friend, a great colleague and an excellent diplomat. I personally mourn because I feel that I have lost a brother.

Turning to the subject of today's meeting, Bolivia welcomes the presence of the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, Mr. Óscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar; and our sister Ms. Mejía Vélez, Permanent Representative of Colombia. Likewise, we wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, for sharing with the Council the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/279). We also wish to thank Mr. Arnault for his excellent work, his commitment, his dedication to this issue and for his professionalism. We also welcome the presence at this meeting of the many ambassadors and representatives from my region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Their presence demonstrates the unwavering commitment of my entire region to the peace process.

In the various missions carried out by the Security Council during the past two administrations, Bolivia has seen the peace process in Colombia held up as an example by several leaders from around the world. The determination and commitment of both parties throughout that time has shown that it is possible to achieve results that many deemed impossible. They ended half a century of war and gave hope to millions of Colombians living in fear. They made it possible for the members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) to surrender their weapons and become a political party; and they have turned Colombia into a point of reference for other countries going through similar situations.

The participation of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) in the 11 March legislative elections despite the obstacles is a historic event and a significant step forward in the transition of Colombia from conflict to peace. The peace process today is perhaps confronting the most difficult challenges since its start. Frustration, a sense of uncertainty and hate speech are on the rise in the face of the upcoming elections and issues that neither the Government nor FARC have been able to confront. In spite of all that, hearing the President of Colombia and the leader of FARC reiterate their unshakeable commitment to the process sustains the hope of all those who trust that Colombia has embraced a path to peace from which there is no turning back.

There are disagreements that will not disappear overnight. The war has left consequences that cannot be easily resolved and that do not allow the people that have lived in conflict to flourish fully. However, after seven attempts at dialogue over many years, Colombia finally reached a Peace Agreement that satisfied the needs of both parties and turned to the Security Council to support its implementation. The trust placed in the Council demonstrates the importance of this United Nations organ for the world. If the peace process does not move ahead, it will not be not only a failure for Colombia but for all of us. It will be a failure for negotiation, which is one of the most important political tools that make it possible for humankind to peacefully resolve their disputes. That is one of the fundamental values on which the Organization is based.

Six months ago, we began the most complicated phase of the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, which is the political, economic and social reintegration into society of former FARC-EP combatants. We commend the measures devised by the Government to overcome pending issues in the areas of legal, security and socioeconomic guarantees. However, it is important to step up efforts to accelerate the implementation of those measures.

First and foremost, Bolivia is of the view that to guarantee appropriate reintegration into civilian life, it is essential to comply fully with what is set out in the agreement in terms of legal reintegration. We urge progress in certifying and applying amnesty measures for the approximately 400 former FARC-EP members who remain imprisoned. We also underscore the start of the activities of a Special Jurisdiction for Peace. It is important to uphold the scope of the Special Jurisdiction so that the victims at the centre of these efforts can access justice and truth.

Secondly, it is essential to strengthen security in the areas that have been most affected by the conflict. The increase during the reporting period in the number of murders of social leaders, former FARC-

EP members and their family members are alarming. Most of the killings have taken place outside the areas previously controlled by FARC-EP, which means that it is important that the authorities provide security guarantees to surrounding zones.

Thirdly, it is important to implement concrete measures to make progress in comprehensive rural reform. We believe that formalizing access to land is essential to guarantee stable and lasting peace. That could bolster the trust of the former combatants in the reintegration process.

With regard to the process of negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, we would like to express our support for the resumption of dialogue. That should lead to the establishment of a definitive cessation of hostilities and a process that makes it possible to achieve just and lasting peace.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the commitment, dedication and work being carried out daily by Special Representative Arnault and the entire Mission team. We would also like to reiterate the wholehearted support of Bolivia for the peace process led by the Government of Colombia and FARC. We underscore the conviction and commitment demonstrated by President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón and the leaders of FARC to consolidate peace in Colombia. The peace that is being built is not only the birthright of the Colombian people; it has become the heritage of the entire world.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to join other colleagues who preceded me to convey my condolences for the passing of our colleague and friend Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire. We will truly miss him. He was always a smiling and loving friend. We will miss his presence today and in future. Bernard served his country with high professionalism. He was a distinguished diplomat whom I knew for more than 20 years at the United Nations. In my name and on behalf of my colleagues in the Kuwaiti Mission, and on behalf of the Government of the State of Kuwait, allow me to express our condolences to the family of Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, his colleagues in the Permanent Mission, his friends as well as the Government of Côte d'Ivoire.

Turning to the topic at hand, I would like at the outset to welcome the participation of the Vice-President and the Foreign Minister of Colombia in this meeting. Their presence here today is a clear indication of interest shown by the Colombian Government achieving a durable and stable peace in Colombi also thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representativ the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nat Verification Mission in Colombia, for his valu briefing and comprehensive presentation on the r prominent achievements made as well as the challe that face the peace process in Colombia. We take opportunity to renew our support for the Colom peace process, which will be an example to draw u in order to resolve other conflicts before us.

I would like to focus on three main aspe first, the current political developments; secon the reintegration of former members of the Fue Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejercito Pueblo (FARC-EP); and, thirdly, the role of the Un Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

With regard to current political developments results of the parliamentary elections held last m are a clear indication of how serious the Colom Government and parties to the conflict are a achieving a durable and stable peace in Colom That has always been one of the aspirations of Colombian people. The success of the elections, wit participation of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucion del Común (FARC) political party, previously FA EP, and the increase in participation by 5.2 cent — or approximately 3.6 million voters — const an important stage in the reintegration of the party the political scene after its members had directed weapons against the Government for over 50 y This is an additional step in the transition of Colo from conflict to peace and stability.

We call on all political parties to participate i presidential elections next month in order to consol sound and comprehensive political practices. We value and encourage the resumption of the p talks that started on 15 March 2018 in Quito bet the Colombian Government and the Ejército Liberación Nacional.

As for the reintegration of former membe FARC-EP, now the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucio del Común, we stress the important role playe the Colombian Government in cooperation United Nations agencies, such as the United Na Development Programme, UN-Women and the U Nations Mine Action Service, as well as internat

non-governmental organizations, in implementing the Peace Agreement and build capacities. The Colombian Government has issued a number of decrees on the Special Jurisdiction actions and the creation of a Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing, estimated to number 60,000 people, due to the conflict. All those important steps will help enhance trust between the relevant parties.

It is now essential that needed measures be taken in relation to security, legal, social and economic guarantees to protect and reintegrate former FARC-EP members into civil society as stated in the Peace Agreement, given that violence has again erupted in the most affected areas. Three members of the Ecuadorian press were killed recently. We stress that there is an urgent need to protect media personnel and humanitarian workers.

In conclusion, we would like to commend the great efforts of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, led by Mr. Jean Arnault, in coordination with national, regional and local authorities, civil society organizations, the private sector and the international community. The Mission has played a positive role in enhancing dialogue with women's associations in cooperation with UN-Women, and has provided protection to children through a reintegration programme for children associated with former FARC-EP members.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): We have received the news of the sudden and completely untimely passing of Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue with deep sadness and disbelief. On behalf of Poland, our Permanent Representative, Ambassador Joanna Wronecka, and our entire delegation, let me express our heartfelt condolences to the family of Ambassador Tanoh-Boutchoue and the entire team of the Côte d'Ivoire Mission. We will remember Bernard as a great diplomat and a cordial friend and colleague. He served Côte d'Ivoire with grace, wisdom and dignity. We will miss him deeply.

I now turn to the topic of today's discussion. I would like to warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Oscar Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, and Her Excellency Ms. Maria Angela Holguin Cuellar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia. I would also like to thank our briefer, Mr. Jean Arnault, for a very informative briefing.

With parliamentary elections completed and the presidential elections just around the corner, we are approaching a decisive point in the Colombian peace process, which has been an undeniable success for that country's society, the Colombian authorities as well as for the United Nations community. Poland fully supports the implementation of the Peace Agreement and commends every effort made by the people involved in the process — from the former guerillas now establishing farms in Pondores to the brave police officers on the streets of Medellin to the officials in Bogotá.

The legislative elections that took place on 11 March were Colombia's most peaceful in over 50 years. Voting and political participation reached new heights in virtually every department, showing the visible positive impact of the disarmament of over 90 per cent of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). In addition, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional has upheld a temporary unilateral ceasefire with the Government. Thanks to the Peace Agreement, 10 seats in Congress will now be taken by the representatives of the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) political party. FARC's political transition should soon bear fruit.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that less than a year has elapsed since the disarmament of FARC-EP, there is growing mistrust on the part of ex-combatants that the Government will fail to completely fulfil its commitments to them. We should be aware that the positive momentum may be gradually fading away.

While awaiting appropriate legislative action, no land has been transferred to the collective agricultural projects. More than 600 FARC-EP members remain in prison due to bureaucratic delays in the implementation of the amnesty law. Development programmes and productive projects in the countryside should be approved, implemented and funded in a more coordinated way and without further delays. We reiterate the need to adopt a national reintegration plan linking reintegration to development. We strongly believe that the landmark decree enabling access to land ownership to former combatants will offer after its adoption the strongest incentive for a majority of former FARC-EP members, vastly helping them in the process of reintegration.

We welcome the recent progress made in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, in particular

the setting up of the special transitional justice courts and the Commission on Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition. Police and military casualties have dropped, and the number of internal internally displaced persons has fallen significantly. At the same time, homicide rates remain largely unchanged, and violence in former FARC-EP strongholds increased dramatically in the first months of 2018.

It is also worrying that the cultivation of illicit crops is steadily increasing. Many families have joined the crop substitution process, but little progress has been made in strengthening local markets for alternative products or in rural road construction. We cannot ignore the lack of coordination between the crop substitution programme and the Government's forced eradication efforts. Those issues are undermining trust between the Government and local communities.

As we have stated before, current reintegration efforts lack a gender perspective and comprehensive initiatives made especially for FARC-EP women. Durable peace can be achieved only when all people — women and men — are equally and in a meaningful way involved in the peace process.

In conclusion, Poland supports the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which continues to play a vital role in supporting the Peace Agreement. We also commend the role of the United Nations country team and every United Nations agency for being present on the ground. We note in particular the role of the United Nations Mine Action Service, which aims at bringing an end to the suffering of Colombians as a result of the widespread presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

We believe that the stakes for peace in Columbia are higher than ever. Poland strongly supports the Colombian Government's efforts to make the peace process a success.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin this statement by remembering my brother and friend, Mr. Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue. I had the good fortune of sitting next to Bernard during these three and a half months of our presence in the Security Council, during which time we served each other glasses of water and cough drops and relayed jokes and thoughts about the high and complex responsibility we shared as representatives of our respective countries on the Security Council. I was able to measure and assess the very high quality of Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue as a person. He was jovial, friendly, simple, humble, a great professional diplomat and a person who, once one knew him, one had the impression of having known him for years. His sudden physical disappearance is a great blow to the diplomatic community of the United Nations in general and to the Group of African States and the African members of the Council in particular. We express our deepest condolences to his bereaved family, his compatriots and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. May the Almighty Lord take him to his breast. May my dear friend and brother rest in peace.

I wish to welcome His Excellency the Vice-President of Colombia, Mr. Oscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, and Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ms. Maria Angela Holguin Cuéllar, and to thank them for being present at this meeting. Their presence is a testament to the great importance they attach to this issue.

Our delegation appreciates the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2018/279), which has just been presented to us by Special Representative Mr Jean Arnault. We commend him for the important, clear and detailed information he has just given us, but also for the arduous and difficult work he and his team are undertaking in Colombia in the framework the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for the political, economic and social integration of former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), as well as to guarantee their security and that of the communities affected by the conflict in Colombia.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea commends the progress achieved in the Colombian political process, including the holding of legislative elections on 11 March, which represented an important step in the transition of Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común from weapons to politics and in Colombia's transition from conflict to peace. The success in terms of participation is an endorsement by the Colombian people of the peace process and a statement that the process is irreversible. We hope that the same spirit will prevail in the upcoming presidential elections, and that political actors will demonstrate maturity and good political sense and help to consolidate that political process.

The development of events in Colombia is a good example of how frank, direct and inclusive negotiations can lead to resolving a problem when there is a sincere will to move forward and leave 50 years of conflict behind. The international community's support in that process has been and continues to be very important. Challenges remain, such as the security of former FARC-EP combatants in some areas of the country, their socioeconomic reintegration and reinsertion, the lack of a functioning legal framework providing them access to land, the murders of community and social leaders and so forth. Those aspects must be taken into account, as they could delay the permanent strengthening of the process.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea commends the Colombian authorities on the measures they have taken to secure the process, such as strengthening security measures in the most affected areas, the investigation of the murders of former combatants and community leaders by the Office of the Attorney General and the adoption of legal measures regulating access to land, which are all steps in the right direction. The resumption of talks with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional is a very positive step, which should lead to the complete restoration of peace in Colombia. That would undoubtedly help the country to explore and develop its full economic potential.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea calls on the Security Council and the international community to continue to fully support the peace process in Colombia and to respect the leadership of the Government and the people of Colombia in that process with constructive assistance.

In conclusion, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea reiterates its support for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and all Colombian actors and encourages them to continue their efforts to fully achieve irreversible peace in the beautiful country that is Colombia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Peru.

We thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his briefing. We reiterate our full support for the important work he is doing with his team. I would like to welcome in particular the participation of Vice-President Oscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, Minister for Foreign Affairs María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar and Permanent Representative María Emma Mejía Vélez, and underscore their commitment and the important role they are playing in supporting peace.

Peru reaffirms its determined support for the peace process in the sisterly Republic of Colombia. We would like to note the courage of its Government in resolving the long-standing conflict with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) through a negotiated solution, which enjoyed international support during negotiations and the Security Council's commitment in implementing the Peace Agreement.

Building peace in Colombia is of course a complex process, and as such it faces major challenges. We therefore highlight the Government's efforts to adapt national legislation to the Peace Agreement; to ensure security; to entrench the State's presence throughout its territory and to promote the socioeconomic reintegration of former combatants, especially in rural areas. We also want to encourage the authorities and the people of Colombia to persevere in those efforts, to speed up the implementation of the Peace Agreement and to remain united in building sustainable peace.

Democracy and participation are key elements of peacebuilding. We welcome the massive turn-out by citizens in the parliamentary elections last month, which serves to underscore and confirm their democratic traditions. We are hopeful about the preparations for the upcoming presidential elections. We welcome the resumption of dialogue between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and encourage the continuation of talks.

As already stated, the process is complex and replete with challenges. In spite of significant progress made and the political will of the Government to implement the Peace Agreement, there are concerns about the murders reported outside of the training and reintegration areas. We underscore our strong condemnation of the murder of three Ecuadorian journalists, who were kidnapped by FARC-EP dissidents. We extend our condolences and solidarity to their relatives and to the sister nation of Ecuador. We believe that it is crucial to stand up resolutely to the enemies of peace. The validity of the rule of law is a core pillar of sustaining peace. We therefore underscore that fact that the Peace Agreement guarantees access to

justice for all parties to the conflict in Colombia and does not in any way encourage impunity.

We believe that Colombians can be optimistic about the future. Peace has led to a considerable increase in investment and tourism and a significant decrease in the murder rate. Colombia is now a vibrant country that is lucky to be given a second chance. According to a Colombian tourism advertisement, the only risk is wanting to stay.

We would like to conclude by voicing our support for the Verification Mission and for Mr. Arnault's work, as well as to underscore the unity of the Security Council with regard to the Colombian peace process. We reiterate Peru's commitment to sustaining peace in that sister country and the consolidation of the Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Vice-President of Colombia.

Mr. Naranjo Trujillo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I proceed, on behalf of the Colombian people, I would like to extend our condolences on the death of the Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, who was a unconditional friend of peace and a pillar of support for Colombia. We deeply regret his passing.

I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your efforts and those of your delegation during your presidency of the Security Council. Similarly, I thank all of the members of the Council for their unwavering support for peace in Colombia. That support has been confirmed through the holding of today's meeting.

I also thank the Secretary-General for his balanced and objective report (S/2018/279). I also thank his Special Representative, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his committed, professional and admirable leadership, for which the Colombian people and the entire region will be forever grateful.

Peace in Colombia also means peace in the continent, our Latin American region. Rather than be discouraged about the underlying challenges to building peace, we reiterate our willingness to persist. Now is not the time to give up. Now is the time to continue to build peace. We have always said that seeking peace is a complex and difficult task. It took decades to create an environment conducive to negotiations. We also said that building peace through a negotiated solution to the conflict was also a complex and difficult challenge, but we achieved it. We now declare that building peace requires maximum energy and national will to ensure that it is not just a phenomenal value but an indelible one. Such peace is built day by day.

To that end, with the leadership of the President of Colombia, we reiterate before the Council today, based on the situation on the ground and on the conclusions of the Secretary-General when he underscored in his report that considerable progress had been made — for example, the laying down of weapons and the move towards legality by those who had posed a threat to Colombian institutions in the past — as well as when he pointed out the remaining challenges, that those challenges are being addressed as a matter of priority. During today's meeting — and we very much appreciate such impartiality — several problems that could be viewed through the prism of the glass being half empty were raised. What we still must do to consolidate peace begins with safeguarding the lives, integrity and freedom of our country's community leaders and human rights defenders throughout our territory.

That situation highlights a major contradiction in Colombia. We note that, although we have achieved the lowest murder rate in the past 42 years, there has been an increase in the number of leaders being killed. Now the conflict has ended, they have called for respect for the rule of law and speak out against illegal activities conducted during the armed conflict. It is sad to see the rural leaders who promote crop substitution being threatened by drug-related transnational crime. That is why I would like to reiterate that, instead of lowering our guard, undermining institutional capacity in an attempt to control the entire country and continuing to combat crime, Colombia is building capacity with the help of its long-standing allies. We do so because we understand that the principle of shared responsibility can work to rid the region of organized crime.

However, we face challenges that go beyond security itself and that pertain to those who laid down their weapons and chose democracy. Political participation is at the very core of consolidating peace. That is why we support many of the statements made by Ambassadors here in the Council today. They underscored the fact that, for the first time, an organization that has become a political party and laid down its weapons after half a century of fighting is taking part in elections and playing by the rules

of democracy. It is true that the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común, the political party, in its first elections, received fewer votes than expected but, at the same time, it is also true the institutional participatory framework has broadened considerably and has led to unprecedented parliamentary elections, with more than 2 million additional votes, as compared to previous elections. That points to a genuine and inclusive democracy, in particular with regard to those who laid down their weapons and embraced democratic values and principles. The Government will continue to provide such guarantees for political participation.

However, the report on the Mission also underscores the need to move forward so that the conditions exist for employment, social and economic reintegration. Another key issue is that of land. I would like to state here that we are moving towards the issuance of a final decree that states that those who reintegrate into society after laying down their weapons will be on equal footing with members of communities that were most affected by the conflict in order to have access to land and receive support for productive ventures as former fighters-cum-farmers. We are making progress to ensure that this transition to lawful order is a resounding success.

In that regard, today we can say that approximately 12,000 former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) have opened bank accounts, received their basic monthly income and signed up for the national health-care, social and pension systems. Five thousand of those ex-combatants have laid down their weapons to take up paper and pen as they commence training and schooling processes. That means that we already have a significant group undergoing a real process of transformation.

We are moving forward in that, irrespective of the succeeding Government in a democracy, today, with our elections forthcoming, regardless of the Administration that succeeds us, it will have a clear and sound road map towards entrenching an irreversible peace in Colombia, the benefits of which will extend to the entire region. We cannot deny that we face challenges and difficulties of a historic magnitude — I am referring to the great tragedy that our nation suffered as it endured the scourge of drug-trafficking. For almost 40 years, we witnessed how the mafias undermined institutional stability, compromised the safety and security of communities and instigated, supported and promoted illegal crops and requisitioning.

Before the Council, I would like to say that Colombia has channelled its capacities, which were previously limited to containing the war machine during the conflict with FARC-EP, to make organized crime a joint priority. That is how we are able to reach areas that, over decades, had no Government presence and expel the ruthless drug traffickers who have caused so much damage. In that regard, I would like to reaffirm our commitment in solidarity to our neighbouring and friendly countries that they can rest assured that Colombia fully assumes its responsibility to not allow or tolerate such crime.

Furthermore, we are making strides in peacebuilding, which means bridging the gap between the rural parts of the country and its urban parts, for a strong Colombia that was, as I mentioned, confined by the armed conflict, leaving in its wake gaps of inequality that we need to bridge. For that reason, to build peace in Colombia today it is not enough to only comply with the peace agreements, but we must also adopt an agenda of reform and change, led by President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, that would enable the Colombian people, with their silent revolutions, to succeed. For example, presently 30,000 young people — from the humblest of backgrounds but also the brightest of our country — have received full scholarships to the best universities in our country. That revolution has also seen 5 million Colombians lifted out of abject poverty, as we have been negotiating and building peace over the years. We believe that peace should translate to greater equality, prosperity and education.

In that connection, I would like to express my appreciation for the various forms of support we have received. I reiterate that we hope to be able to continue to count on a Council that, in the face of difficulties, understands those difficulties and that does not rest on its laurels but, rather, encourages us to continue moving forward in overcoming challenges.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.